

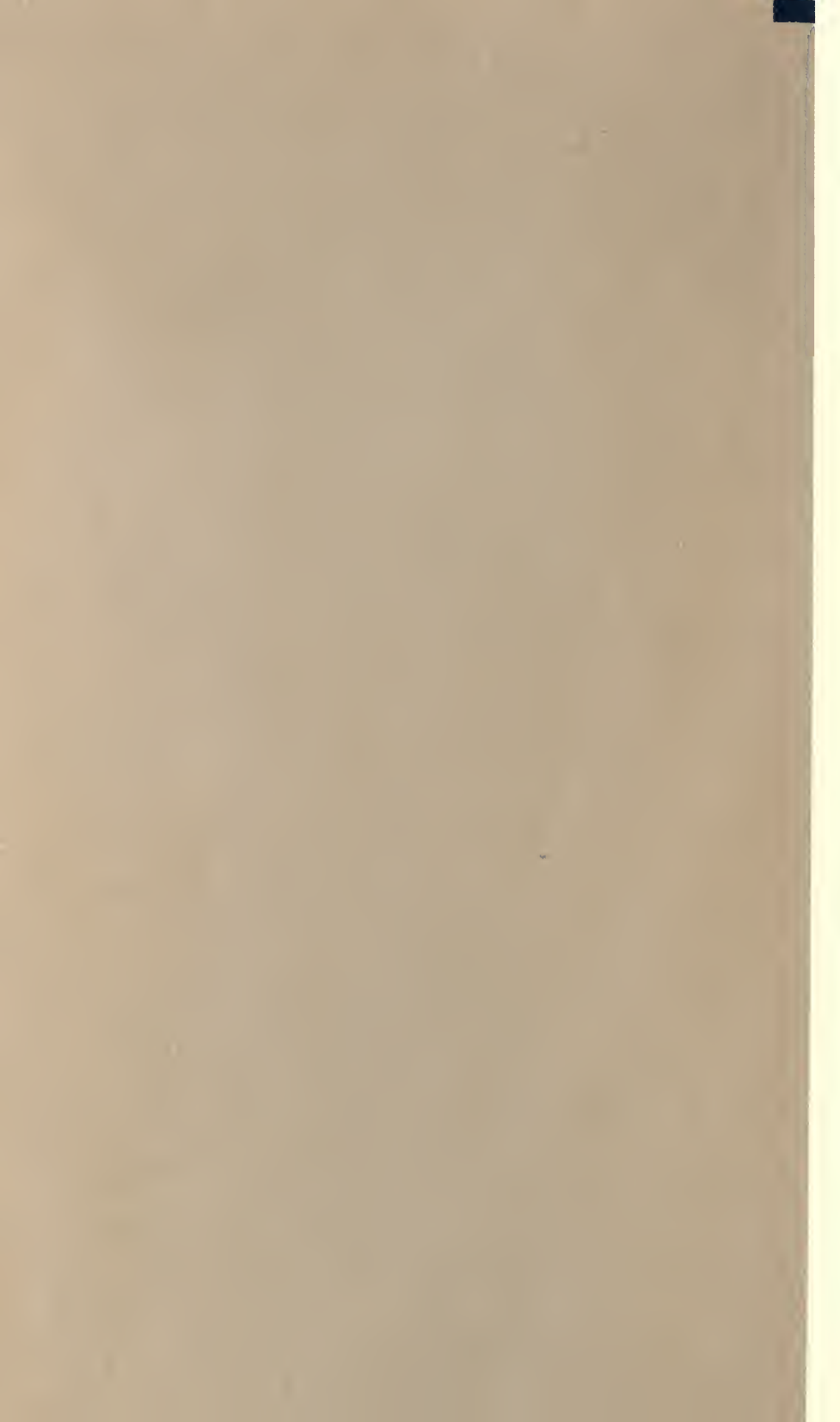


3 1761 05070336 2

Mill, John Stuart
The slave power

E
441
M625

0555



PRICE 5 CENTS.

THE
SLAVE POWER:

ITS CHARACTER, CAREER, AND PROBABLE DESIGNS;
BEING AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN THE REAL ISSUES
INVOLVED IN THE AMERICAN CONTEST.

BY J. E. CAIRNES, M. A.,

PROFESSOR OF JURISPRUDENCE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN QUEEN'S COLLEGE, GALWAY;

AND LATE WHATELY PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF

DUBLIN. LONDON: 1862.



[This Article, from the last "Westminster Review," was written by J. STUART MILL, Esq., whose character, as "the best thinker in England," is well known to literary men.—T. J. C.]

NEW YORK:

T. J. CROWEN, PUBLISHER AND BOOKSELLER, No. 699 BROADWAY.

1862.

THE SLAVE POWER.

This volume has a two-fold claim to attention; on the author's account, and on its own. Mr. Cairnes, one of the ablest of the distinguished men who have given lustre to the much-calumniated Irish colleges, as well as to the chair of Political Economy, which Ireland owes to the enlightened public spirit of Archbishop Whately, is known to the thinking part of the public as the contributor to English periodicals of the clearest and most conclusive discussions which have yet appeared on some of the most disputed and difficult economical questions of the time. He has now, in a work of larger dimensions, given the result of the study which, both as a first-rate political economist, and in the higher character of a moral and political philosopher, he has devoted to the American contest. A work more needed, or one better adapted to the need, could scarcely have been produced at the present time. It contains more than enough to give a new turn to English feeling on the subject if those who guide and sway public opinion were ever likely to reconsider a question on which they have so deeply committed themselves. To all who are still open to conviction, it is an invaluable exposition both of the principles and the facts of the case. The last is as much required as the first; for the strange partiality of the nation which most abhors negro slavery, to those who are urging an internecine war solely for its propagation, could not have existed for a moment, had there not been, not merely a complete misunderstanding of principles, but an utter ignorance of facts.

We believe that we shall, on the present occasion, do a better service to truth and right by helping to extend the knowledge of the contents of Mr. Cairnes's treatise, than by any comments of our own. Mr. Cairnes opens up the question in a lucid and natural order, and so exhausts it in all its more important aspects, that a mere condensation of his book would be the most powerful argumentative discourse on the subject, which could well be given in the narrow compass of an article. Not that, as is the case with lax and diffuse writers, his argument gains by condensation. On the contrary, it loses greatly. In Mr. Cairnes's book there is nothing verbose, nothing superfluous; the effect is nowhere weakened by expansion, nor the impression of the whole frittered away by undue expatiating on parts; the work is artistic as well as scientific, observing due proportion, dwelling long enough, and not too long, on each portion of the subject, and passing to a new point exactly when the mind is prepared for it, by having completely appropriated those preceding. An attempt to convey the substance of such a composition in an abridged form, may give some idea of the skeleton, but none of the nerve and muscle: the greatest merit which it could have would be that of stimulating the reader to have recourse to Mr. Cairnes's own pages.

After sweeping away the idle notion, which never could have been entertained by any one conversant with even the surface of American history, that the quarrel is about tariffs, or anything whatever except slavery, Mr. Cairnes proceeds to the main thesis of his book, viz., that the Slave Power, whose character and aims are the cause of the American contest, is "the most formidable antagonist to civilization, progress which has appeared for many centuries, representing a system of society at once retrograde and aggressive, a system which, containing within it no germ from which improvement can spring, gravitates inevitably towards barbarism, while it is impelled by exigencies inherent in its position and circumstances to a constant extension of its territorial domain." This is what a man of distinguished ability

who has deeply considered the subject, thinks of the new power, which England, by the moral influence of its opinion and sympathies, is helping to raise up. "The vastness," he continues, "of the interests at stake in the American contest, regarded under this aspect, appears to me to be very inadequately conceived in this country, and the purpose of the present work is to bring forward this view of the case more prominently than has yet been done."

Accordingly, in the first place, Mr. Cairnes expounds the economic necessities under which the Slave Power is placed by its fundamental institution. Slavery, as an industrial system, is not capable of being everywhere profitable. It requires peculiar conditions. Originally a common feature of all the Anglo-Saxon settlements in America, it took root and became permanent only in the Southern portion of them. What is the explanation of this fact? Several causes have been assigned. One is, diversity of character in the original founders of these communities; New England having been principally colonized by the middle and poorer classes, Virginia and Carolina by the higher. The fact was so, but it goes a very little way towards the explanation of the phenomenon, since "it is certain the New Englanders were not withheld from employing slaves by moral scruples;" and if slave labor had been found suitable for the requirements of the country, they would, without doubt, have adopted it in fact, as they actually did in principle. Another common explanation of the different fortune of slavery in the Northern and Southern States is, that the Southern climate is not adapted to white laborers, and that negroes will not work without slavery. The latter half of this statement is opposed to fact. Negroes are willing to work wherever they have the natural inducements to it, inducements equally indispensable to the white race. The climate theory is inapplicable to the Border Slave States, Kentucky, Virginia, and others, whose climate "is remarkably genial, any perfectly suited to the industry of Europeans." Even in the Gulf States, the alleged fact is only true, as it is in all other parts of the world, of particular localities. The Southern States, it is observed by M. de Tocqueville, "are not hotter than the south of Italy and Spain." In Texas itself there is a flourishing colony of free Germans, who carry on all the occupations of the country, growth of cotton included, by white labor; and "nearly all the heavy out-door work in the city of New Orleans is performed by whites."

What the success or failure of slavery as an industrial system depends on, is the adaptation of the productive industry of the country to the qualities and defects of slave labor. There are kinds of cultivation which even in tropical regions cannot advantageously be carried on by slaves; there are others in which, as a mere matter of profit, slave labor has the advantage over the only kind of free labor which, as a matter of fact, comes into competition with it—the labor of peasant proprietors.

The economic advantage of slave labor is, that it admits of complete organization: "it may be combined on an extensive scale, and directed by a controlling mind to a single end." Its defects are, that it is given reluctantly; it is unskilful; it is wanting in versatility. Being given reluctantly, it can only be depended on as long as the slave is watched; but the cost of watching is too great if the workmen are dispersed over a widely extended area; their concentration, or, in other words, the employment of many workmen at the same time and place, is a condition *sine qua non* of slavery as an industrial system; while, to enable it to compete successfully with the intense industry and thrift of workmen who enjoy the entire fruits of their own labor, this concentration and combination of labor must be not merely possible, but also economically preferable. The second disadvantage of slave labor is that it is unskilful: "not only because the slave, having no interest in his work, has no

inducement to exert his higher faculties, but because, from the ignorance to which he is of necessity condemned, he is incapable of doing so." This disqualification restricts the profitableness of slavery to the case of purely unskilled labor. "The slave is unsuited for all branches of industry which require the slightest care, forethought, or dexterity. He cannot be made to co-operate with machinery; he can only be trusted with the commonest implements; he is incapable of all but the rudest labor." The third defect of slave labor is but a form of the second; its want of versatility. "The difficulty of teaching the slave anything is so great, that the only chance of turning his labor to profit is, when he has once learned a lesson, to keep him to that lesson for life. Where slaves, therefore, are employed, there can be no variety of production. If tobacco be cultivated, tobacco becomes the sole staple, and tobacco is produced whatever be the state of the market, and whatever be the condition of the soil." All this, not as matter of theory merely, but of actual daily experience in the Southern States, is superabundantly proved, as Mr. Cairnes shows, by Southern testimony.

It follows, first, that slave labor is unsuited for manufactures, and can only, in competition with free labor, be profitably carried on in a community exclusively agricultural. Secondly, that even among agricultural employments it is unsuited to those in which the laborers are, or without great economical disadvantage can be, dispersed over a wide surface; among which are nearly all kinds of cereal cultivation, including the two great staples of the Free States, maize and wheat. "A single laborer can cultivate twenty acres of wheat or Indian corn, while he cannot manage more than two of tobacco, or three of cotton." Tobacco and cotton admit, therefore, the possibility of working large numbers within a limited space: and as they also benefit in a far greater degree than wheat or maize by combination and classification of labor, the characteristic advantage of slave labor is at the highest, while its greatest drawback, the high cost of superintendence, is reduced to the minimum. It is to these kinds of cultivation, together with sugar and rice, that in America slave labor is practically confined. Wherever, even in the Southern States, "the external conditions are especially favorable to cereal crops, as in parts of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, and along the slopes of the Alleghanies, there slavery has always failed to maintain itself."

But a kind of cultivation suitable to it is not the only condition which the slave system requires in order to be economically profitable. It demands in addition, an unlimited extent of highly fertile land. This arises from the other two infirmities of slave labor, its unskilfulness and its want of versatility. This point being of the very highest importance, and the foundation of the author's main argument, we give the statement of it in his own words:—

"When the soils are not of good quality, cultivation needs to be elaborate; a larger capital is expended, and with the increase of capital the processes become more varied, and the agricultural implements of a finer and more delicate construction. With such implements slaves cannot be trusted, and for such processes they are unfit. It is only, therefore, where the natural fertility of the soil is so great as to compensate for the inferiority of the cultivation, where nature does so much as to leave little for art, and to supercede the necessity of the more difficult contrivances of industry, that slave labor can be turned to profitable account.

"Further, slavery, as a permanent system, has need not merely of a fertile soil, but of a practically unlimited extent of it. This arises from the defect of slave labor in point of versatility. As has been already remarked, the difficulty of teaching the slave anything is so great—the result of the compulsory ignorance in which he is kept, combined with want of intelligent interest in his work—that the only chance of rendering his labor profitable is, when he has once learned a lesson, to keep him to that lesson for life. Accordingly, where agricultural operations are carried on

by slaves, the business of each gang is always restricted to the raising of a single product. Whatever crop is best suited to the character of the soil and the nature of slave industry, whether cotton, tobacco, sugar, or rice, that crop is cultivated, and that crop only. Rotation of crops is thus precluded by the conditions of the case. The soil is tasked again and again to yield the same product, and the inevitable result follows. After a short series of years its fertility is completely exhausted, the planter abandons the ground which he has rendered worthless, and passes on to seek in new soils for that fertility under which alone the agencies at his disposal can be profitably employed."—(pp. 53-6.)

Accordingly, the ruin, and in many cases the abandonment to nature, of what were once the most productive portions of the older Slave States, are facts palpable to the eye, admitted and loudly proclaimed by slaveholders. And hence that pressing demand for the perpetual extension of the area of slavery, that never-ceasing tendency westward, and unceasing struggle for the opening of fresh regions to slave-owners and their human property, which has grown with the growth of the cotton cultivation, and strengthened with its strength; which produced the seizure of Texas, the war with Mexico, the buccancering expeditions to Central America, and the sanguinary contest for Kansas; which has been the one determining principle of Southern politics for the last quarter of a century; and because at last, though tardily, resisted by the North, has decided the Cotton States to break up the Union.

Such being the economic conditions of a slave community like those of the Southern States, the author proceeds to show how this economic system gives rise to a social and a political organization tending in the highest degree to aggravate the evils which emanate originally from the economic system itself.

"The single merit of slave labor as an industrial instrument consists, as we have seen, in its capacity for organization, its susceptibility of being adjusted with precision to the kind of work to be done, and of being directed on a comprehensive plan towards some distinctly conceived end. Now, to give scope to this quality, the scale on which industry is carried on must be extensive; and to carry on industry on an extensive scale, large capitals are required;" moreover, a capitalist employing slave labor requires funds sufficient not merely to maintain his slaves, but to purchase their fee simple from the first. "Owing to these causes, large capitals are, relatively to small, more profitable, and are at the same time absolutely more required, in countries of slave, than in countries of free labor. It happens, however, that capital is in slave countries a particularly scarce commodity, owing partly to the exclusion from such countries of many modes of creating it—manufactures and commerce, for example—which are open to free communities; and partly to what is also a consequence of the institution, the unthrifty habits of the upper classes. From this state of things result two phenomena, which may be regarded as typical of industry carried on by slaves—the magnitude of the plantations and the indebtedness of the planters. Wherever negro slavery has prevailed in modern times, these two phenomena will be found to exist. 'Our wealthier planters,' says Mr. Clay, 'are buying out their poorer neighbors, extending their plantations, and adding to their slave force. The wealthy few, who are able to live on smaller profits, and to give their blasted fields some rest, are thus pushing off the many who are merely independent.' At the same time these wealthier planters are, it is well known, very generally in debt, the forthcoming crops being for the most part mortgaged to Northern capitalists, who make the needful advances, and who thus become the instruments by which a considerable proportion of the slave labor of the South is maintained. The tendency of things, therefore, in slave countries, is to a very unequal distribution of wealth. The large capitalists, having a steady advantage over their smaller competitors, engross with the progress of time a larger and larger proportion of the aggregate wealth of the country, and gradually acquire the control of its collective industry. Meantime, amongst the ascendant class a condition of general indebtedness prevails."—(pp. 66-71.)

Side by side with these great land and slave proprietors grows up a white pro-

letariat of the worst kind, known in Southern phrasology as "mean whites" or "white trash." The vast districts (becoming, under the deteriorating effects of slave industry, constantly larger) which are surrendered to nature, and relapse into wilderness,

"Become the resort of a numerous horde of people, who, too poor to keep slaves, and too proud to work, prefer a vagrant and precarious life spent in the desert, to engaging in occupations which would associate them with the slaves whom they despise. In the Southern States no less than five millions of human beings are now said to exist in this manner, in a condition little removed from savage life, eking out a wretched subsistence by hunting, by fishing, by hiring themselves out for occasional jobs, by plunder. Combining the restlessness and contempt for regular industry peculiar to the savage, with the vices of the *proletaire* of civilized communities, these people make up a class at once degraded and dangerous; and constantly reinforced as they are by all that is idle, worthless, and lawless among the population of the neighboring States, form an inexhaustible preserve of ruffianism, ready at hand for all the worst purposes of Southern ambition. The planters complain of these people for their idleness, for corrupting their slaves, for their thievish propensities; but they cannot dispense with them; for in truth they perform an indispensable function in the economy of slave societies, of which they are at once the victims and the principal supporters. It is from their ranks that those filibustering expeditions are recruited, which have been found so effective an instrument in extending the domain of the slave power; they furnish the 'Border Ruffians' who in the colonization struggle with the Northern States contend with Freesoilers on the territories, and it is to their antipathy to the negroes that the planters securely trust for repressing every attempt at servile insurrection."—(pp. 75-76.)

Such, then, is the constitution of society in the Slave States; "it resolves itself into three classes—the slaves on whom devolves all the regular industry; the slaveholders, who reap all its fruits; and an idle and lawless rabble who live dispersed over vast plains in a condition little removed from absolute barbarism." Of society thus composed, the political structure is determined by an inexorable law.

"When the whole wealth of a country is monopolized by a thirtieth part of its population, while the remainder are by physical or moral causes consigned to compulsory poverty and ignorance; when the persons composing the privileged thirtieth part are all engaged in pursuits of the same kind, subject to the influence of the same moral ideas, and identified with the maintenance of the same species of property; political power will of necessity reside with those in whom centre the elements of such power—wealth, knowledge, and intelligence—the small minority for whose exclusive benefit the system exists. The polity of such a society must thus, in essence, be an oligarchy, whatever be the particular mould in which it is cast. Nor is this all. A society so organized tends to develop with a peculiar intensity the distinctive vices of an oligarchy. In a country of free labor, whatever be the form of government to which it is subject, the pursuits of industry are various. Various interests, therefore, take root, and parties grow up which, regarding national questions from various points of view, become centres of opposition, whether against the undue pretensions of any one of their number, or against those of a single ruler. It is not so in the Slave States. That variety of interests which springs from the individual impulses of a free population does not here exist. The elements of a political opposition are wanting. There is but one party, but one set of men who are capable of acting together in political concert. The rest is an undisciplined rabble. From this state of things the only possible result is that which we find—a despotism, in the last degree unscrupulous and impatient of control, wielded by the wealthy few.

"To sum up in a few words the general results of the foregoing discussion; the Slave Power—that power which has long held the helm of government in the Union—is, under the forms of a democracy, an uncontrolled despotism, wielded by a compact oligarchy. Supported by the labor of four millions of slaves, it rules a population of five millions of whites—a population ignorant, averse to systematic industry, and prone to irregular adventure. A system of society more formidable for evil,

more menacing to the best interests of the human race, it is difficult to conceive."—(pp 85-87, 92.)

Are there, in the social and political system which has now been characterized, any elements of improvement, any qualities which leave room for a reasonable hope of the ultimate, however gradual, correction of its inherent evils? Mr. Cairnes has conclusively shown that the very reverse is the case. Instead of raising themselves to the level of free societies, these communities are urged by the most imperious motives to drag down, if possible, free societies to the level of themselves.

It may be thought, perhaps, that American slavery will, from merely natural causes, share the fate of slavery elsewhere. The institution of slavery was once universal, but mankind have nevertheless improved; the most progressive communities in the ancient and modern world—the Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, mediæval Europeans—have been afflicted with this scourge, but by the natural progress of improvement have got rid of it; and why, it may be said, should not this also happen in the Southern States? and if so, would not an attempt to anticipate this natural progress, and make emancipation move forward more rapidly than the preparation for it, be full of mischief even to the oppressed race itself?

Mr. Cairnes feels all the importance of this question; and no part of his book is more instructive, or more masterly, than the chapter in which he grapples with it. He shows, that "between slavery as it existed in classical and mediæval times, and the system which now erects itself defiantly in North America," there are such deep-seated distinctions, as render the analogy of the one entirely inapplicable to the other.

The first distinction is the vital fact of the difference in color between modern slaves and their masters. In the ancient world, slaves, once freed, became an integral part of free society; their descendants not only were not a class apart, but were the main source from which the members of the free community were recruited; and no obstacle, legal or moral, existed to their attainment of the highest social positions. In America, on the contrary, the freed slave transmits the external brand of his past degradation to all his descendants. However worthy of freedom, they bear an outward mark which prevents them from becoming imperceptibly blended with the mass of the free; and while that odious association lasts, it forms a great additional hindrance to the enfranchisement by their masters, of those whom, even when enfranchised, the masters cannot endure to look upon as their fellow-citizens.

But another difference between ancient and modern slavery, which still more intimately affects the question under discussion, arises from the immense development of international commerce in modern times.

"So long as each nation was in the main dependent on the industry of its own members for the supply of its wants, a strong motive would be present for the cultivation of the intelligence, and the improvement of the condition, of the industrial classes. The commodities which minister to comfort and luxury cannot be produced without skilled labor, and skilled labor implies a certain degree of mental cultivation, and a certain progress in social respect. To attain success in the more difficult industrial arts, the workman must respect his vocation, must take an interest in his task; habits of care, deliberation, forethought, must be acquired; in short, there must be such a general awakening of the faculties, intellectual and moral, as by leading men to a knowledge of their rights and of the means of enforcing them, inevitably disqualifies them for the servile condition. Now this was the position in which the slave-master found himself in the ancient world. He was, in the main, dependent on the skill of his slaves for obtaining whatever he required. He was therefore naturally led to cultivate the faculties of his slaves, and by consequence to promote generally the improvement of their condition. His progress in the enjoyment of the material advantages of civilization depended directly upon *their*

progress in knowledge and social consideration. Accordingly, the education of slaves was never prohibited in the ancient Roman world, and, in point of fact, no small number of them enjoyed the advantage of a high cultivation. 'The youths of promising genius,' says Gibbon, 'were instructed in the arts and sciences, and almost every profession, liberal and mechanical, might be found in the household of an opulent senator.' Modern slaveholders, on the contrary, are independent of the skill, and therefore of the intelligence and social improvement, of their slave population. They have only need to find a commodity which is capable of being produced by crude labor, and at the same time in large demand in the markets of the world; and by applying their slaves to the production of this, they may, through an exchange with other countries, make it the means of procuring for themselves whatever they require. Cotton and sugar, for example, are commodities which fulfil these conditions; they may be raised by crude labor, and they are in large demand throughout the world. Accordingly, Alabama and Louisiana have only to employ their slaves in raising these products, and they are enabled through their means to command the industrial resources of all commercial nations. Without cultivating one of the arts or refinements of civilization, they can possess themselves of all its material comforts. Without employing an artizan, a manufacturer, a skilled laborer of any sort, they can secure the products of the highest manufacturing and mechanical skill."—(pp. 100-3.)

There being no inducements *for* cultivating the intelligence of slaves, the mighty motives which always exist *against* suffering it to be cultivated, have had full play; and in all the principal Slave States, teaching a slave to read or write is rigorously prohibited, under most severe penalties both to the teacher and the taught.

There is yet another important distinction between slavery in ancient and in modern times—namely, "the place which the slave trade fills in the organization of modern slavery. Trading in slaves was doubtless practised by the ancients, and with sufficient barbarity. But we look in vain in the records of antiquity for a traffic which, in extent, in systematic character, and above all, in the function discharged by it as the common support of countries breeding and consuming human labor, can with justice be regarded as the analogue of the modern slave trade—of that organized system which has been carried on between Guinea and the coast of America, and of that between Virginia, the Guinea of the New World, and the slave-consuming States of the South and West." The barbarous inhumanity of the slave trade has long been understood; but what has not been so often noticed is the mode in which it operates in giving increased coherence and stability to the system of which it is a part; first, "by bringing the resources of salubrious countries to supplement the waste of human life in torrid regions; and secondly, by providing a new source of profit for slaveholders, which enables them to keep up the institution, when, in the absence of this resource, it would become unprofitable and disappear. Thus, in Virginia, when slavery, by exhausting the soil, had eaten away its own profits, and the recolonization of the State by free settlers had actually begun, came suddenly the prohibition of the African slave trade, and nearly at the same time the vast enlargement of the field for slave labor by the purchase of Louisiana; and these two events made slavery in Virginia again profitable, as a means of breeding slaves for exportation and sale to the South.

It is through the existence of this abundant breeding-ground for slaves, which enables their number to be kept up and increased in the face of the most frightful mortality in the places to which they are sent, that slavery is enabled, as it exhausts old lands, to move on to new ones, preventing that condensation of population which, by depriving the "mean whites" of the means of subsisting without regular work, might render them efficient workmen, instead of, as they now are, "more inefficient, more unreliable, more unmanageable" than even the slaves, and so might gradually effect the substitution of free for slave labor. The consequence is that population

under these institutions increases only by dispersion. Fifteen persons to the square mile are its maximum density in the really slave countries; a state of things under which "popular education becomes impracticable; roads, canals, railways must be losing speculations" (in South Carolina "a train has been known to travel a hundred miles with a single passenger"); all civilizing agencies, all powers capable of making improvement penetrate the mass of the poor white population, are wanting.

There remain, as a source from which the regeneration of slave society is to be looked for, the slave-owners themselves; the chance, whatever it may be, that these may be induced, without external compulsion, to free their slaves, or take some measure, great or small, to prepare the slaves for freedom. An individual here and there may be virtuous enough to do this, if the general sentiment of those by whom he is surrounded will allow him; but no one, we suppose, is simple enough to expect this sacrifice from the entire ruling class of a nation, least of all from the ruling class in the Slave States, with whom the maintenance of slavery has become a matter of social pride and political ambition as much as of pecuniary interest. "It is not simply as a productive instrument that slavery is valued by its supporters. It is far rather for its social and political results, as the means of upholding a form of society in which slaveholders are the sole depositaries of social prestige and political power, as the corner-stone of an edifice of which they are the masters, that the system is prized. Abolish slavery, and you introduce a new order of things, in which the ascendancy of the men who now rule in the South would be at an end. An immigration of new men would set in rapidly from various quarters. The planters and their adherents would soon be placed in a hopeless minority in their old dominions. New interests would take root and grow; new social ideas would germinate; new political combinations would be formed; and the power and hopes of the party which has long swayed the politics of the Union, and which now seeks to break loose from that Union in order to secure a free career for the accomplishment of bolder designs, would be gone forever." Accordingly, the South has advanced, from the modest apologies for slavery of a generation ago, to loudly vaunting it as a moral, civilizing, and every way wholesome institution; the fit condition not only for negroes but for the laboring classes of all countries; nay, as an ordinance of God, and a sacred deposit providentially entrusted to the keeping of the Southern Americans, for preservation and extension.

The energies of the Southern rulers have long been devoted to protecting themselves against the economical inconveniences of slavery in a manner directly the reverse of either its extinction or its mitigation. To obtain for it an ever wider field is the sole aim of their policy, and, as they are firmly persuaded, the condition of their social existence. "There is not a slaveholder," says Judge Warner, of Georgia, and in saying this he only expressed the general sentiment, "in this house or out of it, but who knows perfectly well that whenever slavery is confined within certain specified limits its future existence is doomed; it is only a question of time as to its final destruction. You may take any single slaveholding county in the Southern States, in which the great staples of cotton and sugar are cultivated to any extent, and confine the present slave population within the limits of that county. Such is the rapid natural increase of the slaves, and the rapid exhaustion of the soil in the cultivation of those crops (which add so much to the commercial wealth of the country), that in a few years it would be impossible to support them within the limits of such county. Both master and slave would be starved out; and what would be the practical effect in any one county, the same result would happen to all the Slaveholding States. Slavery cannot be confined within certain limits without producing the destruction

of both master and slave; it requires fresh lands, plenty of wood and water, not only for the comfort and happiness of the slave, but for the benefit of the owner." And this is the doctrine of the *advocates of slavery*! What, to any mind but that of a slaveholder, would seem at once the *reductio ad absurdum* and the bitterest moral satire on slavery, is by them brought forward—such is the state of their minds—as an unanswerable argument for bringing fresh territory under it as fast as it exhausts the old, until, we suppose, all the remaining soil of our planet is used up and depopulated.

Even were they not prompted to this aggressive ambition by pecuniary interest they would have a sufficient inducement to it in the passions which are the natural growth of slave society. "That which the necessity for fresh soils is to the political economy of such communities, a lust of power is to their morality. The slaveholder lives from infancy in an atmosphere of despotism; he sees around him none but abject creatures who, under fearful penalties to be inflicted by himself, are bound to do his slightest, his most unreasonable bidding." The commerce between master and slave, in the words of Jefferson, himself born and bred a slave-owner, "is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions—the most unremitting despotism on the one hand, and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped with its odious peculiarities." The arrogance, self-will, and impatience of restraint, which are the natural fruits of the situation, and with which the Southern-American character in all its manifestations is deeply stamped, suffice of themselves to make the slaveholding class throw all their pride and self-importance into the maintenance, extension and exaltation of their "peculiar institution;" the more, because the institution and its upholders are generally reprobated by mankind, and because they have to defy the opinion of free nations, and may have to resist the exertion of their physical power.

Hence it is that the politicians of the Slave States have devoted themselves, with the ardor of fanaticism, to acquiring, by fair means or foul, ascendancy in the politics of the Union, in order that they might employ that ascendancy in gaining territory for the formation of new Slave States; and again to create more and more Slave States, in order to maintain their ascendancy in the Union. Mr. Cairnes has traced with a vigorous hand the history of these efforts: the struggle between freedom and slavery for the possession of Missouri; the compromise by which that new State was given up to slavery, on condition that no future Slave State should be created north of the parallel 36° 30' of north latitude; the filibustering occupation of Texas in order to detach it from Mexico, its annexation to the Union by means of slavery ascendancy, and the war with Mexico for the acquisition of more slave territory; the Missouri compromise, as soon as all its fruits had been reaped, discovered to be unconstitutional, and repudiated, the principle next set up being "squatter sovereignty" (the doctrine that Congress could not legislate for the territories, and that the first inhabitants had the right to decide whether they would allow slavery or not); the Northern territories consequently opened to slavery, and the race which followed between Northern and Southern occupants for the possession of Kansas; a slavery constitution for Kansas voted at the rifle's point by bands of "border ruffians" from the South, who did not even intend to settle in the territory; when this nefarious proceeding was frustrated by the crowds of free settlers who flocked in from the North and refused to be bound by the fictitious constitution, the princi-

ple of squatter sovereignty also repudiated, since it had failed to effect Southern objects, and the doctrine set up that slavery exists *ipso jure* in all the territories, and that not even the settlers themselves could make it illegal; and finally a decision obtained from the highest tribunal of the United States (which Southern influence had succeeded in filling with Southern lawyers) by which not only this monstrous principle was affirmed, but the right of a slave-master was recognized to carry his slaves with him to any part of the Free States, and hold them there, any local law to the contrary notwithstanding. This was the one step too much in the otherwise well-planned progress of the Southern conspiracy. At this point, the Northern allies, by whose help alone they could command a majority in the councils of the Federation, fell off from them. The defeat of the Southern candidate for the presidency followed as a consequence; and this first check to the aggressive and advancing movement of slavery, was the signal for secession and civil war. Well may Mr. Cairnes say that this series of events "is one of the most striking and alarming episodes in modern history, and furnishes a remarkable example of what a small body of men may effect against the most vital interests of human society, when, thoroughly understanding their position and its requirements, they devote themselves, deliberately, resolutely, and unscrupulously, to the accomplishment of their ends."

Should these conspirators succeed in making good their independence, and possessing themselves of a part of the territories, being those which are in immediate contact with Mexico, nothing is to be expected but the spread of the institution by conquest (unless prevented by some European power) over that vast country, and ultimately over all Spanish America, and if circumstances permit, the conquest and annexation of the West Indies; while so vast an extension of the field for the employment of slaves would raise up a demand for more, which would in all probability lead to that re-opening of the African slave-trade, the legitimacy and necessity of which have long been publicly asserted by many organs of the South. Such are the issues to humanity which are at stake in the present contest between free and slaveholding America; and such is the cause to which a majority of English writers, and of Englishmen who have the ear of the public, have given the support of their sympathies.

What is the meaning of this? Why does the English nation, which has made itself memorable to all time as the destroyer of negro slavery, which has shrunk from no sacrifices to free its own character from that odious stain, and to close all the countries of the world against the slave merchant; why is it that the nation which is at the head of Abolitionism, not only feels no sympathy with those who are fighting against the slaveholding conspiracy, but actually desires its success? Why is the general voice of our press, the general sentiment of our people, bitterly reproachful to the North, while for the South, the aggressors in the war, we have either mild apologies or direct and downright encouragement? and this not only from the Tory and anti-democratic camp, but from Liberals, or *soi-disant* such?

This strange perversion of feeling prevails nowhere else. The public of France, and of the Continent generally, at all events the Liberal part of it, saw at once on which side were justice and moral principle, and gave its sympathies consistently and steadily to the North. Why is England an exception? Several causes may be assigned, none of them honorable to this country, though some, more than others, may seem to make the aberration excusable.

In the first place, it must, we fear, be admitted, that the anti-slavery feeling in England, though quite real, is no longer, in point of intensity, what it was. We do

not ascribe this to any degeneracy in the public mind. It is because the work, so far as it specially concerns England, is done. Strong feeling on any practical subject is only kept up by constant exercise. A new generation has grown up since the great victory of slavery abolition; composed of persons whose ardor in the cause has never been wrought upon and strung up by contest. The public of the present day think as their fathers did concerning slavery, but their feelings have not been in the same degree roused against its enormities. Their minds have been employed, and their feelings excited, on other topics, on which there still remained, as it might seem, more to be done. Slavery has receded into the back-ground of their mental prospect; it stands, to most of them, as a mere name, the name of one social evil among many others; not as, what in truth it is, the summing-up and concentration of them all; the stronghold in which the principle of tyrannical power, elsewhere only militant, reigns triumphant.

It must be remembered, too, that though the English public are averse to slavery, several of the political and literary organs which have most influence over the public are decidedly not so. For many years the *Times* has taken every opportunity of throwing cold water, as far as decency permitted, on the cause of the negro; had its attempts succeeded, the African squadron would have been withdrawn, and the effort so long and honorably persisted in by England to close the negro coast against the man-stealer would have been ignominiously abandoned. Another of the misleaders of opinion on this subject, more intellectual in its aims, and addressing itself to a more intellectual audience, has been from its first origin, however Liberal on the surface, imbued with a deeply seated Tory feeling which makes it prefer even slavery to democratic equality; and it never loses an opportunity of saying a word for slavery, and palliating its evils.

The most operative cause, however, of the wrong direction taken on the American question by English feeling, is the general belief that Americans are hostile to England, and long to insult and humble her if they had but an opportunity; and the accumulated resentment left by a number of small diplomatic collisions, in which America has carried herself with a high hand, has bullied and blustered, or her press has bullied and blustered for her, and in which through the reluctance of England to push matters to extremities, which do not vitally concern the national honor, bullying and blustering have been allowed to prevail. The facts are too true; but it has not been sufficiently considered, that the most foul-mouthed enemies of England in the American press and in Congress were Southern men, and men in the Southern interest; and that the offensive tone and encroaching policy of the Federal Government were the tone and policy of a succession of governments created by the South, and entirely under Southern influence. If some bitterness towards England has shown itself rather widely among the Northern people since the commencement of the war, and has been ministered to in their usual style by the hacks of the newspaper press, it must be said in excuse, that they were smarting under disappointed hopes; that they had found only rebuke where they felt that they deserved, and had counted upon finding, sympathy, and when sympathy would have been of the utmost importance to their cause. "If England had but sympathized with us now," said recently to us one of the first of American writers, "it would have united the two nations almost to the end of time."

But none of these causes would have accounted for the sad aberration of English feeling at this momentous crisis, had they not been combined with an almost total ignorance respecting the antecedents of the struggle. England pays a heavy price for its neglect of general contemporary history, and inattention to what takes place

in foreign countries. The English people did not know the past career or the present policy and purposes of the Slave Power. They did not, nor do they yet know, that the object, the avowed object, of secession was the indefinite extension of slavery; that the sole grievance alleged by the South consisted in being thwarted in this; that the resistance of the North was resistance to the spread of slavery—the aim of the North its confinement within its present bounds, which, in the opinion of the slave-owners themselves, ensures its gradual extinction, and which is the only means whereby the extinction *can* be gradual. The ignorance of the public was shared by the Foreign Minister, whose official attitude in reference to the contest has been everything which it ought to be, but who did unspeakable mischief by the extra-official opinion so often quoted, that the Southern States are in arms for independence, the Northern for dominion.

When this was the view taken of the contest in the quarter supposed to be best informed, what could be expected from the public? Could they fail to bestow their sympathies on the side which, they were told from authority, was fighting for the common right of mankind to a government of their choice, while the other had armed itself for the wicked purpose of exercising power over others against their will? The moral relations of the two parties are misplaced, are almost reversed, in Earl Russell's dictum. Could we consent to overlook the fact that the South are fighting for, and the North against, the most odious form of unjust dominion that ever existed; could we forget the slaves, and view the question as one between two white populations; even then, who, we ask, are fighting for dominion, if not those who having always before succeeded in domineering, break off from the Union at the first moment when they find that they can domineer no longer. Did ever any other section of a nation break through the solemn contract which united them with the rest, for no reason but that they were defeated in an election? It is true indeed, and they are welcome to the admission, that a very serious interest of the slave-owning oligarchy depended on retaining the power to domineer. They had at stake, not dominion only, but the profits of dominion; and those profits were, that the propagation of slavery might be without limit, instead of being circumscribed within the vast unoccupied space already included in the limits of the Slave States, being about half of their entire extent.

But if the South are fighting for slavery, the North, we are told, are, at all events, not fighting against it: their sole object in the struggle is the preservation of the Union.

And if it were so, is there anything so very unjustifiable in resisting, even by arms, the dismemberment of their country? Does public morality require that the United States should abdicate the character of a nation, and be ready at the first summons to allow any discontented section to dis sever itself from the rest by a single vote of a local majority, fictitious or real, taken without any established form, or public guarantee for its genuineness and deliberateness? This would be to authorize any State, or part of a State, in a mere fit of ill-temper, or under the temporary influence of intriguing politicians, to detach itself from the Union, and perhaps unite itself to some hostile power; and the end would probably be to break down the Union, from one of the great nations of the world, into as many petty republics as there are States, with lines of custom-houses all around their frontiers, and standing armies always kept up in strength to protect them against their nearest neighbors.

It is so new a thing to consider questions of national morality from the point of view of nations, instead of exclusively from that of rulers, that the conditions have

not yet been defined under which it is the duty of an established government to succumb to a manifestation of hostile feeling by a portion, greater or smaller, of its citizens. Until some rule or maxim shall have grown up to govern this subject, no government is expected or bound to yield to a rebellion until after a fair trial of strength in the field. Were it not for the certainty of opposition, and the heavy penalties of failure, revolt would be as frequent a fact as it is now an unfrequent: rebellions would be attempted, not as they now are, in cases of almost unanimous discontent, but as often as any object was sought, or offence taken, by the smallest section of the community.

Would the Government or people of the United Kingdom accept for themselves this rule of duty? Would they look on quietly and see the kingdom dismembered? They might renounce transmarine possessions which they hold only as dependencies, which they care little for, and with which they are neither connected by interest nor by neighborhood; but would England acquiesce, without fighting, in the separation of Ireland or Scotland? and would she be required to do so by any recognized obligation of public morality?

Putting at the very lowest the inducements which can be supposed to have instigated the people of the Northern States to rush into the field with nearly all their available population, and pledge the collective wealth of the country to an unparalleled extent, in order to maintain its integrity: it might still be thought, that a people who are supposed to care for nothing in comparison with the "almighty dollar," ought to have some credit given them for showing, by such decisive proofs, that they are capable of sacrificing that and everything else to a patriotic impulse. It might have been supposed, too, that even had their motives been wholly selfish, all good men would have wished them success when they were fighting for the right; and, considering what it was that they were fighting against, might have been glad that even selfish motives had induced one great nation to shed its blood and expend its substance in doing battle against a monster evil which the other nations, from the height of their disinterested morality, would have allowed to grow up unchecked, until the consequences came home to themselves.

But such a view of the motives of the Northern Americans would be a flagrant injustice to them. True, the feeling which made the heroic impulse pervade the whole country, and descend to the least enlightened classes, was the desire to uphold the Union. But not the Union, simply. Had they consented to give up the Northern interpretation of the pact; had they yielded to the Supreme Court's Southern exposition of it, they could have won back the South to the Federation by an unanimous voice. It was because they valued something else even more highly than the Union, that the Union was ever in a position in which it had to be fought for. The North fights for the Union, but the Union under conditions which deprive the Slave Power of its pernicious ascendancy. People talk as if to support the existing constitution were synonymous with altogether abandoning emancipation, and "giving guarantees to slavery." Nothing of the sort. The Constitution guarantees slavery against nothing but the interference of Congress to legislate for the legally constituted Slave States. Such legislation, in the opinion equally of North and South, is neither the only, nor the best, nor the most effectual mode of getting rid of slavery. The North may indeed be driven to it; and, in the opinion of near observers, is moving rapidly towards that issue. Mr. Russell, in his letters to the *Times*, was constantly reiterating that the war would before long become an abolition war; and Mr. Dicey, the latest traveller in America who has published his impressions, and whose book should be in every one's hand, says that this predicted

consummation is now rapidly drawing near, through the conviction becoming general in the North, that Slavery and the Union are incompatible. But the Federal Government was bound to keep within the Federal Constitution; and what, that could be done against slavery consistently with the Constitution, has it left undone? The District of Columbia was Constitutionally under the authority of Congress; Congress have abolished slavery in that District, granting compensation. They have offered liberal pecuniary assistance to any Slave State which will take measures for either immediately or gradually emancipating its slaves. They have admitted Western Virginia into the Union as a State, under a provision that all children born after a certain day of 1863 shall be born free. They have concluded a treaty with England for the better suppression of the slave trade, conceding, what all former American Governments have so obstinately resisted, the right of search. And, what is more important than all, they have, by a legislative act, prohibited slavery in the territories. No human being can henceforth be held in bondage in any possession of the United States which has not yet been erected into a State. A barrier is thus set to all further extension of the legal area of slavery within the dominion of the United States. These things have the United States done, in opposition to the opinion of the Border States which are still true to their allegiance, at the risk of irretrievably offending those States, and deciding them to go over to the enemy. What could the party now dominant in the United States have done more, to prove the sincerity of its aversion to slavery, and its purpose to get rid of it by all lawful means?

And these means would, in all probability, suffice for the object. To prevent the extension of slavery is, in the general opinion of slaveholders, to ensure its extinction. It is, at any rate, the only means by which that object can be effected through the interest of the slaveholders themselves. If peaceful and gradual is preferable to sudden and violent emancipation (which we grant may in the present case be doubtful), this is the mode in which alone it can be effected. Further colonization by slaves and slave-masters being rendered impossible, the process of exhausting the lands fitted for slave cultivation would either continue, or would be arrested. If it continue, the prosperity of the country will progressively decline, until the value of slave property was reduced so low, and the need of more efficient labor so keenly felt, that there would be no motive remaining to hold the negroes in bondage.

If, on the other hand, the exhaustive process should be arrested, it must be by means implying an entire renovation, economical and social, of Southern society. There would be needed new modes of cultivation, processes more refined and intellectual, and, as an indispensable condition, laborers more intelligent, who must be had either by the introduction of free labor, or by the mental improvement of the slaves. The masters must resign themselves to become efficient men of business, personal and vigilant overseers of their own laborers; and would find that in their new circumstances successful industry was impossible without calling in other motives than the fear of the lash. The immediate mitigation of slavery, and the education of the slaves would thus be certain consequences, and its gradual destruction by the consent of all concerned, a probable one, of the mere restriction of its area: whether brought about by the subjugation of the Southern States, and their return to the Union under the Constitution according to its Northern interpretation, or by what Mr. Cairnes regards as both more practical and more desirable, the recognition of their independence, with the Mississippi for their western boundary.

Either of these results would be a splendid, and probably a decisive and final victory over slavery. But the only point on which we hesitate to agree with Mr.

Cairnes is in preferring the latter to the former and more complete issue of the contest. Mr. Cairnes is alarmed by what he thinks the impossibility of governing this group of States after reunion, unless in a manner incompatible with free institutions—as conquered countries, and by military law. We are unable to see the impossibility. If reduced by force, the Slave States must submit at discretion. They could no longer claim to be dealt with according to the Constitution which they had rebelled against. The door which has been left open till now for their voluntary return would be closed, it is to be presumed, after they had been brought back by force. In that case the whole slave population might, and probably would, be at once emancipated, with compensation to those masters only who had remained loyal to the Federal Government, or who may have voluntarily returned to their allegiance before a time fixed. This having been done, there would be no real danger in restoring the Southern States to their old position in the Union. It would be a diminished position, because the masters would no longer be allowed representatives in Congress in right of three-fifths of their slaves. The slaves once freed and enabled to hold property, and the country thrown open to free colonization, in a few years there would be a free population in sympathy with the rest of the Union. The most actively disloyal part of the population, already diminished by the war, would probably, in great part emigrate, if the North were successful. Even if the negroes were not admitted to the suffrage, or if their former masters were able to control their votes, there is no probability, humbled and prostrated as the Slave Power would be, that in the next few years it would rally sufficiently to render any use which it could make of constitutional freedom again dangerous to the Union. When it is remembered that the thinly peopled Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, and some parts even of the South-Eastern States, have even now so few slaves that they may be made entirely free at a very trifling expense in the way of redemption; and when the probable great influx of Northern settlers into those provinces is considered, the chance of any dangerous power in the councils of the United States to be exercised by the six or seven cotton States, if allowed to retain their constitutional freedom, must appear so small that there could be little temptation to deny them that common right.

It may however prove impossible to reduce the Seceded States to unconditional submission without a greater lapse of time, and greater sacrifices, than the North may be willing to endure. If so, the terms of compromise suggested by Mr. Cairnes which would secure all west of the Mississippi for free labor, would be a great immediate gain to the cause of freedom, and would probably in no long period secure its complete triumph. We agree with Mr. Cairnes that this is the only *kind* of compromise which should be entertained for a moment. That peace should be made, giving up the cause of the quarrel—the exclusion of slavery from the territories—would be one of the greatest calamities which could happen to civilization and to mankind. Close the territories, prevent the spread of the disease to countries not now afflicted with it, and much will already have been done to hasten its doom. But that doom would still be distant if the vast uncolonized region of Arkansas and Texas, which alone is thought sufficient to form five States, were left to be filled up by a population of slaves and their masters; and no treaty of separation can be regarded with any satisfaction but one which should convert the whole country west of the Mississippi into free soil.

PLEASE NO.

2 SLIPS FROM THE

2

— M

have c

ing exp

car infir. thern sett

any dangerous power in the

or seven cotton States

ear so small at the

ive

he

7.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

E
441
M625

Mill, John Stuart
The slave power

